JUVENILE ARRESTS IN BURLINGTON, VERMONT, STATE FISCAL YEARS 2005 AND 2006

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This report examines juvenile arrest data for Burlington, Vermont, for state fiscal years 2005 and 2006. It calculates arrest rates for racial/ethnic groups using both U.S. census data and middle and high school population data. School population data show a much higher proportion of minorities than do census data (19.9 versus 8.3 percent), and eliminate the disproportionate minority arrests evident when census data are used to calculate arrest rates. This underscores the importance of using the most current population data available in areas where the minority population is changing rapidly.

As previously reported, juvenile arrest data for Burlington, Vermont showed evidence of disproportionate minority arrests during federal fiscal years 2003 and 2004. In both years, arrest rates for minority youth were approximately twice as high as arrest rates for white youth.[1] In federal fiscal year 2003 (October 1, 2002-September 30, 2003), this difference was largely the result of the disproportionate arrests of black youth. In federal fiscal year 2004 (October 1, 2003-September 30, 2004), minority arrests were more evenly distributed among black, Asian and Hispanic youth. These arrest rates were calculated using U.S. Census data, which showed a minority population in Burlington of approximately 6.3 percent for the year 2000.[2]

Examining arrest data for state fiscal years 2005 and 2006 shows continued disproportionate minority arrests among juveniles *when calculations are based on 2005 census data and a total minority population of 8.3 percent*.[3] Data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 are shown in Table 1A; relative arrest rates are shown in Table 1B.[4] Of the 139 juveniles arrested in fiscal year 2005, 116 were white and 16 were known to be minority. An additional seven were reported by police to be of unknown race/ethnicity.

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[1] See Bellas, Marcia L. 2005. *Disproportionate Minority Arrests Among Juveniles in Vermont, Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004*. Montpelier, Vermont: Vermont Center for Justice Research (http://www.humanservices.vermont.gov/boards-committees/cfcpp/publications/).

[2] Information on the juvenile population in Burlington (those aged 10-17) was not available, so the percentage of youth in Chittenden County (10.8 percent) was applied to Burlington's population. The percentage of youth in each minority group was calculated using the percentages of minorities in Burlington's total population.

[3] A census data estimate of youth aged 10-17 living in Burlington was obtained from the Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont (http://www.crs.uvm.edu/census). Note that the number of youth in Burlington is considerably lower than the 10.8 percent estimate used in the earlier report, indicating that youth are under-represented in the City of Burlington relative to Chittenden County. Estimates of the percentages of different minority groups in Burlington were obtained from http://www.city-data.com/city/Burlington-Vermont.html.

[4] An arrest rate reflects the number of arrests per 1,000 white or minority youth in the population. Dividing the arrest rate for a minority group or groups by the arrest rate for whites yields a Relative Rate Index. A RRI of one indicates that minorities are arrested at the same rate as whites. If the RRI is higher than one, minorities are arrested at a higher rate than whites, and if the RRI is lower than one, minorities are arrested at a lower rate than whites. T-tests were used to determine whether differences are statistically significant.

Conceivably, some or all of these individuals were minorities or their race would have been recorded as white. If those of unknown race/ethnicity are omitted from calculations, this may result in an underestimate of minority arrest rates. Yet even when these individuals are excluded, arrest rates for blacks and Asians were four times higher than the arrest rate for whites.

Table 1A. Burlington Juvenile Population and Arrest Data, State Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.							Total	
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Am. Indian	Other	Minorities	Unknown
Population*	2,717	2,486	49	38	33	35	76	231	
Arrests, FY05	139	116	10	0	6	0	0	16	7
Arrest Rates, FY05	--	46.7	204.1	0	181.8	0	0	69.3	
Arrests, FY06	152	127	15	0	5	0	0	20	5
Arrest Rates, FY06	--	51.1	306.1	0	151.5	0	0	86.6	
*2000 census data for all 10-17 year olds from Vermont Center for Rural Studies. Racial/ethnic composition of minority youth population in Burlington estimated from data at http://www.city-data.com.									

Table 1B. Relative Arrest Rate Indices (RRIs).		
	RRI	
Groups:	2005	2006
White/Black	4.4*	6.0*
White/Asian	3.9*	--
White/All Minorities	1.5 (n.s.)	1.7*
*$p < .05$; -- insufficient number of cases; n.s. = not significant		

The arrest rate for fiscal year 2005 for whites was 47 per 1,000 white youth in the Burlington population, while arrest rates for blacks and Asians were the equivalent of 204 arrests per 1,000 black youth and 182 arrests per 1,000 Asian youth respectively. Note that these numbers of black and Asian youth were not actually arrested. Arrest rates use arrest data and extrapolate to a larger (sometimes hypothetical) population base of 1,000 youth. Because no Hispanic, American Indian, or youth of "other" racial/ethnic groups were arrested during fiscal year 2005, the over-representation of black and Asian youth is largely offset, but still yields an overall arrest rate of approximately 69/1,000 youth for all minority groups combined. Although this reflects an arrest rate almost 50 percent higher than the arrest rate of 47 for white youth, this difference is not statistically significance.

Data for fiscal year 2006 show an arrest rate for blacks six times higher than for whites (306 versus 51/1,000), and an arrest rate for Asians four times higher (152 versus 51/1,000), both statistically significant differences. The overall arrest rate for all minority groups combined is approximately 75 percent higher than for whites (87 versus 51/1,000), also a statistically significant difference.

These data indicate a serious over-representation of minorities among juvenile arrestees. However, at the suggestion of Burlington Police Chief, Thomas Tremblay, I

substituted public school data for census data to more accurately reflect the changing racial composition of Burlington's population. Burlington is a federal relocation site for refugees, and as such, there has been an influx of minorities in recent years not yet apparent in census data.

Tables 2A and 2B show arrest data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006, but calculate arrest rates using public middle and high school population data obtained from the Burlington Public School District. Rather than the 8.3 percent minority population shown in Table 1A, the school population data in Table 2A reveals a minority population of 19.9 percent. This reflects large increases in black and Asian categories relative to census data, while numbers in some other racial/ethnic categories are considerably lower. Nonetheless, the overall number of minorities is greater in the school population data than in the census data. In addition, the total number of juveniles is somewhat less than population estimates. The school data reflects public school students only, so does not include those in private schools, those who are home schooled, and those who are not in school at all.

Table 2A. Juvenile Public School Population and Arrest Data, State Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Am. Indian	Other	Total Minorities	Unknown
Population*	2,010	1,610	208	39	127	10	16	400	
Arrests, FY05	139	116	10	0	6	0	0	16	7
Arrest Rates, FY05	--	72.1	48.1	0	47.2	0	0	40	
Arrests, FY06	152	127	15	0	5	0	0	20	5
Arrest Rates, FY06	--	78.9	72.1	0	39.4	0	0	50	
*Middle and high school population, Burlington Public School District									

Table 2B. Relative Arrest Rate Indices (RRIs).

	RRI	
Groups:	**2005**	**2006**
White/Black	.67 (n.s.)	.91 (n.s.)
White/Asian	.66 (n.s.)	--
White/All Minorities	.56*	.63 (n.s.)
*p < .05; n.s.=not significant		

Using school population data, arrest rates for white youth were actually *higher* in fiscal years 2005 and 2006 than arrest rates for black and Asian youth, a pattern that holds even if youth of "unknown" race are counted as minorities. Seventy-two white youth were arrested per 1,000 white youth in the population, compared to the equivalent of 48 blacks and 47 Asians per 1,000 black or Asian youth in the population. These figures translate into relative arrest rates of .67 for whites/blacks and .66 for whites/Asians in 2005, differences that are not statistically significant. The difference in rates between whites and all minority groups combined is significant, however. The Relative Rate Index of .56 indicates that all minority groups combined are arrested at about half the rate of white youth. Relative Rate Indices for 2006 also reflect lower arrest

rates for minorities than for whites, although differences do not achieve statistical significance.

These analyses demonstrate the importance of using the most accurate data available when determining whether minorities have disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system in a particular geographic area. In the case of Burlington, Vermont, public school data provides a very different picture of the racial/ethnic composition of the population. Rather than much higher arrest rates for Black and Asian youth relative to whites, as was found when census data were used to calculate arrest rates, school data reveal that these minority groups were actually arrested at lower rates than whites. Arrest data do not, of course, reflect contacts with the police that do not lead to formal arrest, data that is also important to examine, as well as whether such contacts are initiated by police or by the public.